



# Senator Pat Thibaudeau

43rd District  
2006 Legislative Session Report



## Keep in Touch!

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As you know by now, the 2006 legislative session is over, even finishing a day early. More importantly, we accomplished a good deal as you will see in the ensuing pages. We either addressed issues of great concern to the public or began the process by which solutions might be reached in subsequent sessions.

There were achievements in the areas of civil rights (at long last!), health, education, elections, treatment of sex offenders and the environment. In the area of capital expenditures for our district, the Pike Place Medical Clinic repairs, the Burke Museum Statewide Education Program, the Aquarium remodel and a mental health facility were funded at least partially. Transportation, as usual, was a major issue with a regional planning bill to be on the ballot with Sound Transit next year.

Again, I thank you for allowing me to represent you. Ours is a great district!

Pat Thibaudeau  
43rd District



### Improving access to health care

For a short session, we accomplished a great deal on the health care front. We invested in our public health system so we'll be ready in the event of an avian flu outbreak. We expanded access to health care for thousands of children and low-income adults. We made progress on the vexing medical malpractice issue. Here are a few of the highlights:

- **Preparing for pandemic influenza.** Experts are convinced that a pandemic outbreak of avian flu is a matter of when, not if. Under some scenarios, such an outbreak in Washington could lead to as many as 198,000 hospitalizations and from 4,000 to 38,000 deaths. Under the premise that it's better to be ready than sorry, Senate Bill 6366 requires local health districts to develop emergency response plans and provides \$9 million in grants and other support so they have the resources to get the job done.
- **Expanded the Basic Health Plan (BHP).** An additional 6,500 low-income adults will be able to enroll in the BHP, bringing total enrollment in this affordable plan to 106,500.
- **Boosted children's health insurance.** Last session, the Legislature made a commitment to work with the private sector to ensure that all children in Washington have health care coverage by 2010. To stay on target to reach the goal, this year's budget provides additional funding so 10,000 more children can be covered through the Immigrant Children's Health Program.
- **Created the Small Business Partnership Program.** Thanks to this legislation, employers with low-income workers will be able to find more affordable coverage. Targeted at employers with 50 or fewer employees, the program provides premium assistance to employees who have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$17,960 for an individual, \$30,520 for a family of three). To be eligible, the employer must pay at least 40 percent of the premium. The program begins on July 1, 2007.
- **Established the Community Health Care Grant Program.** Across the state, community groups are working to help people without health care insurance get health care. This bill is designed



to assist such groups – now up and running in Spokane, Olympia and Bellingham – in bringing their communities together to find local solutions to our health care crisis.

- **Helping low-income seniors with prescription drug co-pays.** With the implementation of the new Medicare Part D prescription benefit, thousands of our most medically vulnerable residents were transferred into the new federal prescription drug program. Thanks to new funding in the state budget, these low-income seniors will not have to pay the co-pay for each prescription.
- **Created the Blue Ribbon Health Care Commission.** The commission is charged with developing a five-year plan to substantially improve access, increase quality and reduce the cost of health care for all Washington residents. The report will be due at the end of this year.
- **Progress on medical malpractice.** With Gov. Christine Gregoire playing a critical role in bridging the differences between physicians and lawyers, the Legislature took up where the voters left off when they turned down both medical malpractice initiatives last fall. We passed a bill that advances the ball by, among other things, improving patient safety and setting up a voluntary arbitration system to settle malpractice disputes.



## Boosting educational opportunities

- **Alternatives to the WASL.** Students must still take the WASL. But recognizing that there are other ways students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills, the Legislature approved alternative methods for students to show their competency. The budget also allocates \$28 million in additional funding to help students achieve high academic standards.
- **Expanding enrollments at college.** A boost in funding will give an additional 500 students the opportunity to get an affordable college education in Washington.

## Promoting cleaner fuels and water

- **Cleaning up Puget Sound.** Steps were taken to ensure clearer waters in the Hood Canal and throughout the Puget Sound by requiring local health authorities to develop plans to repair failing septic systems that are threatening the Sound's ecosystem.
- **Renewable fuels.** To help farmers find alternative uses for crops, as well as promote cleaner air, we set a standard that automotive fuels sold in Washington contain at least 2 percent bio-fuels by 2008.



- **Recycling e-waste.** The popularity of consumer electronic products has created a growing problem with the discarding of old products as new ones are purchased. Manufacturers of TVs, computers and monitors will now work in partnership with the state in maintaining recycling programs for unwanted items.
- **No more state parks parking fees.** We repealed the unpopular \$5 parking fees, and provided funding for the maintenance of the parks.

## Other Statewide Issues:

**Civil rights anti-discrimination law.** Nearly 30 years after it was first proposed, we finally passed legislation that prohibits discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation. This was long past due!

**Unemployment insurance (UI):** UI benefits for laid-off workers will be protected. Businesses' payments into the system will decrease under a bipartisan agreement hammered out in the final hours of the session.

**Sex offenders:** In the aftermath of several frightening child sex abuse cases, lawmakers listened to prosecutors and adopted a package of bills cracking down on sex offenders, including one bill that sets a minimum 25-year sentence for certain cases involving child rape or molestation.



## 43rd District: local issues

**Seattle Aquarium.** The aquarium received a \$2 million state appropriation to help with the \$41 million New Currents project. The project involves considerable construction to shore up the facility to ensure continued safe operation of the aquarium, which plays an important role in educating children and teachers about the natural world.

**Pike Place Medical Clinic emergency repairs.** Dedicated to providing health care services to low-income residents of downtown Seattle, the clinic has been plagued by old plumbing that has caused serious flooding. A \$1 million appropriation from the state will help fix the problem.

**Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture.** The museum received a \$296,000 allocation that will enhance the museum's efforts to help students and teachers better understand science and culture.

**Seattle Central Community College.** Thanks to a \$268,000 appropriation, the SCCC will have additional funding for repairs to the Seattle Maritime Academy.

## Senator Pat Thibaudeau • 2006 Legislative Session Report



Kristine Knudson



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*Thanks to our 2006 Legislative Pages!*

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